

# **Media Coverage of Sexual Crimes:**

## **A case study**

By

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# Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism & Public Relations, is my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other students.

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# **Abstract**

Newspapers have been carrying the key responsibility of disseminating information to the general public and, as a consequence, exert a great influence on public opinion. When it comes to sex crimes coverage, patriarchy and sexism still has great influence, as it is clear the given roles to both female victim and male perpetrator, usually filled with myths and stereotypes. With this idea, the purpose of this study is to identify sexist patterns and stereotypes in news media when reporting sexual crimes regarding two rape cases occurred in Brazil and Ireland. Through a content analysis of different and selected Irish, British and Brazilian publications, newspapers were noticed to present both victim and perpetrator in two different but equally sexist manners.

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# 1 Introduction

Rape is a humiliating act of sexual violence, power and control over a woman's body, in its vast majority. Experiencing rape produces several mental and physical sequels in short or long terms. These include, according to a research by Datafolha (2015, p.4), injuries in sexual organs, fracture, bruises, unwanted pregnancy, acquire sexually transmitted infections and/or HIV and even death. Psychologically, sex crimes can generate a series of disorders, including depression, post traumatic stress, panic, anxiety, suicide and the use of illicit drugs (Datafolha, 2015, p.4).

Even though rape carries traumatic and, sometimes, permanent consequences, victims are often blamed, questioned and judged in many forms. Usually, the victim has to fit in an ideal of victim, which is very likely to the ideal of woman. If the victim is alone, wearing certain clothes, consuming illicit substances or even know their perpetrator, usually her opinion is completely invalidated. In other words, even if the male is the perpetrator, the female victim is the one who must change her behaviours.

It is a problematic scenario, specially considering that this behaviour is cultural. Denys Cuche (1999) explains the term "culture" as the adequate instrument to stop the naturalising explanations of human behaviours. For Cuche, naturalising behaviours require special attention as they are not genuinely natural, but are culturally conditioned.

The term "rape culture" has been used since the 70's to indicate subtle or explicit behaviours that silence or relativize sexual violence against women, even though rape is seen and treated constitutionally as a serious crime. The term "culture" in "rape culture" reinforces the idea that these behaviours cannot be interpreted as normal or natural. It is, indeed, optimistic as if those behaviours are cultural and conditioned; they are passive to changes and even abolishment.

News media have an important role in this scheme as their coverage presents a clear representation of a rape culture and patriarchal reality.

The flat coverage of women views on important issues (e.g.: women business leaders, women judges, women doctors) does not reconcile with the large numbers



of sexual crimes reports involving a female victim, limiting the female role as being vulnerable, passive and fragile.

Media corporations have a brilliant opportunity to try to question and investigate the cultural origin of this horrendous sexual social crime that devastate thousands of victims and it is completely rooted in our society. Instead, the media still limits female roles and, in a way, encourages the existence of an oppressive, patriarchal and sexist society.

This results, once again, in the framing of such item as isolated and random events rather than the consequence of patriarchal power relations that structure all personal relations, including sexual ones. (Byerly and Ross, 2006, p. 43)

This thesis, named *Media Coverage of Sexual Crimes: A case study* aims to investigate the existence of a mediatic rape culture through comparative analysis of two rape cases occurred in Ireland and in Brazil. It then provides content analyses research into understanding media behaviour and coverage in reporting sexual crimes. More specifically, the main purpose of this thesis is to contribute to existing discussion on sexism and gender oppression.

## 1.1 Summary

This thesis is structured in different chapters, starting with the first chapter focusing on the research questions and objectives, the context and general idea behind the study. In chapter two, relevant literature and documentaries is assessed, criticized and reviewed according to the focus of this dissertation. The third chapter depicts the methodology used on the content analyses and further details on the research, such as the construction of the categories and the coding schedule. Subsequently, the fourth chapter presents and analyses the main findings of the research and present relevant results. Lastly, chapter five presents the conclusion argument of the thesis based on the research findings and a recommendation for further studies on the subject.

## 1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

The media is a powerful instrument and it is constantly operating within the "public sphere", theory created by Habermas (1962) to define a space where institutions and public opinion can convene, and therefore interacting with audiences individually mostly in a daily basis. This incessant present can define our society as mediatic, as it impacts people in such a strong manner that the media has a relevant influence in terms of public opinion and in perpetuating culture and values.

When it comes to sexual crimes news, the media and the news often follow a certain pattern that end up strengthening the social culture that oppress women: portraying victims (mostly women) by overexposing them or limiting them as "passive and fragile" and sensationalizing perpetrators, describing them as "abnormal". As it was mentioned previously, this behaviour creates erroneous stereotypes and tends to reinforce female oppression in society and to ignore that a chauvinist culture and oppressive society is the true cause of such traumatic cases.

The aim objective of this research is to analyse how sex crimes victims and accused are portrayed by Irish, British and Brazilian media and compare them. This will be observed by conducting content analyses of how several Brazilian, Irish and British newspaper articles reported two rape cases that happened in 2016 in Rio de Janeiro and in Dublin. The research questions are as it follows:

- I. How the media in Brazil and Ireland portrays rape victims?
- II. How the media in Brazil and Ireland portrays perpetrators?
- III. When it comes to a rape victim, do the Irish, British and the Brazilian media tend to misrepresent women?
- IV. In articles which coverage the case considered, what are the most common information provided about the victim?
- V. Does the media tend to sensationalise or distort rape cases?
- VI. Does the media content on rape cases fit into rape stereotypes?

## 1.3 Expected Results

The research provides a full detailed analysis on the coverage of both rape cases and how the media approach the cases. The findings of the content analysis research, which involves articles from both Brazilian, British and Irish broadsheets and tabloids, will be critically presented and discussed. The objective is to discover if there is a possibility of the media, by analysing their language and their reporting style, could be encouraging sexism and rape culture.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

Media organizations have always had a strong interest in news related to crime, violence and tragedy, and the reason goes far beyond than only a matter of reporting, as negativity is considered a newsworthy factor. Noelle-Neumann (1987) suggests journalists follow certain "news values", a set of assumptions that are considered in order for the news gain more visibility with their readers. In addition, Johnson-Cartee (2004) specifically argues about the negativity issue in a term named "The Ritual of Dramatization" (p. 139), which basically means that drama and tragedy are itself news values because people tend to be interested in drama stories and, as a result, journalists search for occurring drama. However, the problem with the media's coverage of sexual crimes lies with promoting sensationalist stereotypes and assumptions about victims. Considering this argument, it is inevitable to assume that the style on which media covers sexual crimes tends to prioritize firstly their readers' attention and curiosity than the victim and the crime itself.

This chapter analyses and criticizes research, readings and documentaries related to gender oppression, sexual crimes and how they rebound in the media.

### 2.2 Sexual crimes statistics - Ireland and Brazil

The World Health Organization's *World Report On Violence and Health* edited by Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi and Lozano (2002) defines violence against women as any act that can cause or has a high probability of causing any suffering whether it is

physical, sexual, or psychological damage, including threats, deprivation of liberty either in public or private life. Sexual violence is defined as:

Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work. (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi and Lozano, 2002, p. 149)

Moreover, World Health Organization (2002) expands the spectrum of coercion, as it can cover a lot of different degrees of forces, as coercion goes way further than physical. It approaches any kind of mental abuse, psychological intimidation or threats and it can occur when the victim is unable to give consent or to understand the situation.

Specifically on rape, World Health Organization (2002) describes it as “the physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration” (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi and Lozano, 2002, p. 149) of the person's private parts. Any kind of forced contact between the mouth and penis, vulva or anus is also included on the interpretation of sexual violence.

Surveys on numbers and statistics of sexual crimes have been performed in many countries around the world, usually using a similar methodology and similar questions. According to the 2015 research *Rape Crisis Statistics and Annual Report* conducted by Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI), a considerable number of females and males suffered child sexual violence (60% of females and 79% of males), however, it is noticeable that male vulnerability to sexual violence decreases as they age, while female vulnerability remains the same and even increases: over one third of women (33%) were victims of sexual violence in their adulthood compared with 19% of men.

As it was previously mentioned, sexual violence is not limited to rape, but according to RCNI, female victims were more commonly subjected to rape (54%) as opposed to sexual assault (42%) and male victims were more likely to suffer sexual assault (55% of men were sexually assaulted and 41% raped). The vast majority of the perpetrators (against female and male victims) were male (96%) and known to

the victim (85%). The acquaintance with the perpetrator most likely discourages the victim from reporting the occurrence, as only 35% of the victims made reports to the Gardaí or other formal authorities and, in addition, 69% of the victims revealed that they felt the Gardaí treated them in an insensitive manner, which is related to the act of victim blaming.

Additionally, the *SAVI Report: Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland*, conducted by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland in 2002, revealed sexual violence stereotypes and beliefs in Ireland. According to the report, 57% of the respondents agree that women who wear tight and short clothes are inviting rape.

A more recent and widely researched report, *Gender Based Violence* conducted with all European Union countries by European Commission (2016), acknowledge similar findings: about one in five respondents maintain victim-blaming views, claiming that violence against women is often provoked by the victim's behaviour. Another alarming finding is that more than one in four respondents think sexual intercourse without consent is justifiable in the situations proposed by the researcher, for example, when being drunk or on drugs (12%), when accepting going home with someone (11%), wearing revealing clothing (10%) or not properly refusing it, verbally or physically (10%).

In Brazil, the research conducted by The Institute for Applied Economic Research (2016) and the Brazilian Forum of Public Security (2016) share comparable data. In 2016, 45,460 cases of sexual violence were registered in Brazil, with most of the victims being female (88,5%); a proportion of that is subdivided in children (81,2%), teenagers (93,6%) and adults (97,5%). The perpetrators were registered mostly as adult males (96,6%) that were known to the victim (70%). Even though, as in Ireland, only a small percentage of the victims report the crime (32,5%), in 2015 the Disk 180 (Brazilian call centre specialized in sexual and domestic violence against women) shared an increase of 129% of sexual violence reports, representing a still alarming average of 9.53 registers per day.

The studies also revealed Brazil's attitudes towards sexual violence. The Institute for Applied Economic Research (2016) reveals that 58.5% of Brazilians interviewees agree with the sentence "If women knew how to behave, there would

be less rapes" and 26% agree with the affirmation "Women that wear clothes that show their body deserve to be attacked".

## 2.3 Key theories on gender roles and oppression

Bowden and Mummery's (2014) *Understanding Feminism* examines practically all the ideas of leading feminist thinkers and debates in a neutral, complete and clear manner and how the ideas evolved through time, for example, equality and difference, women body and sexuality and the different fields of feminism. The first chapter discusses the origins and sources of women's oppression and inequality, questioning and criticizing the limited view of the "men/women role" in society and considering the female bodily experience.

The proposal to assess everyone according to abstract standards of equality and rights, they argue, is unrealistic and oppressive because it can never take account of all the socioeconomics, gendered, racial and bodily factors that affect people's different values, aspirations and opportunities. (Bowden and Mummery, 2014, p. 22)

In the same context, the authors approach an extremely important topic, considering that the focus of this thesis is the media and, as a consequence, journalists: our language and vocabulary. Social practices of speaking and writing language encode a sexist culture and it has contributed to women's oppression, as for example, the "preference" of using masculine pronouns and adjectives as neutral and the structural relationship between words that systematically encodes female inferiority.

Also, society's sociolinguistics has established different "roles" for men and women, for example, men's speaking is never controlled and is mostly the preference for speeches and debates, while women's speaking are often controlled and moulded to be more delicate, less aggressive and more conservative. Male terms usually imply a sense of power, while female terms convey weakness and dependence (Nye, 1988, p. 174 cited in Bowden and Mummery, 2014, p. 34).

The English language has been literally man made and that is still primarily under male control, constructing and legitimizing male supremacy ( . . . ) As a result women's voices and their words are muted. Lacking the ability to express their experience in male language, they either internalize the male reality or are silenced. (Bowden and Mummery, 2014, p. 36)

The authors approach the process of male and female embodiment, emphasising that the complex female embodiment (e.g. menstruation, lactation, pregnancy and motherhood) were ignored by early theorist and, furthermore, were seen as an inferiority and would limit women to have control of their own bodies and, as a consequence, to transcend mentally.

Women have often not had full control over their own bodies ( . . . ) Because of various forms of legislation, and social and cultural surveillance. As a result women have frequently not been considered to be autonomous agents, to possess the same level of self-determination and self-governance as men. (Bowden and Mummery, 2014, p. 126)

Radical feminist philosophers came later with the appropriate view that female embodiment is actually something to be celebrated and seen as a strength. However, since then, women find themselves fighting for rights over their own bodies in fundamental discussions, such as, abortion and sexual abuse. This is a result by the erroneous and oppressive view that women need men in order to control their bodies in the “right manner”.

Male power, which is typically concerned with controlling reproduction, marriage and motherhood, has historically denied women control of her body through a wide variety of measures, including (Bowden and Mummery, 2014, p. 52): clitoridectomy and infibulation; chastity belts; punishment, including death, for female adultery; punishment, including death, for lesbian sexuality; psychoanalytic denial of the clitoris; strictures against masturbation; denial of maternal and post-menopausal sexuality; unnecessary hysterectomy (Rich, 1948, p. 218 cited in Bowden and Mummery, 2014, p. 52)

The surveillance of women's bodies not only limits women in terms of sexuality and violence, but it produces the idea of the perfect body and, at the same

time, limits the role of a female adult to being a mother. Adult women who are not or do not wish to become mothers are invisible, and she will remain invisible if she is a single mom. In other words, a woman is not a true woman if she does not act the role of a "mother", but this role is invalid if she does not have a "man by her side".

Furthermore not only gender differences an individual in matters of "society's roles" and expectations, but in (hetero) sexuality preference: women and men are "naturally" attracted to each other, men have a stronger sexual desire than women; sex is about male dominance and penetration.

Such assumptions on sexuality hold patriarchal views and transform sexual desire as accepted for men but oppressed for heterosexual women. Moreover, the assumption that men naturally "needs" sex more than women, results in the innumerable amount of excuses when men sexually harass or abuse women: "that's what men do" or even "boys will be boys".

Female and male homosexuals and transsexuals are seen, in this aspect, as abnormal people.

Sexual owners can be heard to offer many justifications for their proprietary sexual proclivity: "It's men's nature... it's women's nature...it's God's will...it's her fault...it's manifest heterosexual destiny...she wants it...I need it...she loves it...she deserves it...whatever turns me on...she's getting paid for it..." (Bordo, 1997, pp. 402-403 cited in Bowden and Mummery, 2014, p. 77)

This attitude has propagated and normalized a series of terrible events towards women throughout history. For example, the assumed possession of wives sexual rights and desires by their husbands or the supposition that rape does not involve sexual intercourse with a companion or acquaintances. Bowden and Mummery (2014) even argues that it can relate to the male dominance culture in pornographic industry and prostitution.

Pornography and prostitution both cause and constitute harm ( . . . ), damaging not only individuals but the chance of developing truly just and equal relations between the sexes in the realms of sexuality and desire. (Bowden and Mummery's, 2014, p. 79)



Similarly, Gayle Rubin's *The Traffic in Women* (1975) analyses the nature of the female gender's oppression and subordination but in a more political and philosophical view, as Rubin analyses the subject from the point of view of different authors, such as Marx and Engels.

From Marx's view, the oppression of women is related to the capitalist system, which defines certain social relations and the women are/were a reserve labour force for capitalism being the administrator of the family and housework. The housework, for Marx, is not productive labour as it does not provide capital but it would be essential for male worker production. However, that would be a limited explanation, considering that women are oppressed even in societies that capitalism is not the current economic system.

On the other hand, for Engels, gender and sex oppression is a part of the capitalist system and sexuality and production would be two distinguished factors both equally and culturally necessary, as the needs of sexuality and production must be satisfied as much as the need of food, clothing and tools.

Every society has a sex/gender system - a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner, no matter how bizarre some of the conventions may be. (Rubin, 1975, p. 165)

Similar to the means of production, sexuality, for Engels is a social and cultural product and every society has its sex and gender system, and patriarchy, a specific form of male dominance, is one of the most common systems that distinguish sexism from capitalism. In his view, the patriarchal system impedes, in a sexual world, the distinction of human capacity and human necessity. On the other hand, sex/gender system is a neutral term that sees oppression as a product of social relations, not as something natural and inevitable.

According to Engels, sexual relations work in a kinship system, defined as forms of sex and gender that varies from one culture to another and would be an explanation for certain taboos, as forced sexual relations.

Lévi-Strauss's (1969) *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* is a book in which kinship is explained as a cultural imposition. It perceives the essence of the kinship system to lie in sex oppression, an exchange of women between men that dominates social intercourse. Marriage, for Lévi-Strauss (1969), is the most basic form of women exchange and it would not work as a relationship of reciprocity but kinship; the male kin would have certain rights in their female kin and women would not have the same rights.

The exchange of women does not necessarily imply that women are objectified ( . . . ) But it does imply a distinction between gift and giver. If women are the gifts, then it is men who are the exchange partners. And it is the partners, not the presents, upon whom reciprocal exchange confers its quasi-mystical power of social linkage. The relations of such system are such that women are in no position to realize the benefits of their own circulation. (Rubin, 1975, p. 174)

This suggestion means that the nature of gender organization and female oppression is in the problematic system of women's exchange, which is different from men. Women are (still) trafficked not only as slaves, servants or prostitutes, only simply for being women.

According to Rubin (1975), Lévi-Strauss's kinship system has rules that affect both genders: "the social organization of sex rests upon gender, obligatory heterosexuality, and the constraint of female sexuality" (Rubin, 1975, p. 179).

The division of the sexes has the effect of repressing some of the personality characteristics of virtually everyone, men and women. The same social system, which oppresses women and its relations of exchange, oppresses everyone in its insistence upon a rigid division of personality. (Rubin, 1975, p. 180)

Michael Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1976) analyses the emergence of sexuality and its repression and prohibition from 17th to 20th century relating it with the rise of capitalism and bourgeois society, and that modern sex is specifically placed by power in a binary system. In addition, the author examines the discourse of sex and how it contributes to the transmission and reinforcement of this power, which relates to the media's role in disseminating sexism and rape culture.

The "distributions of power" and the "appropriations of knowledge" never represent only instantaneous slices taken from processes involving (...) Relations of power-knowledge are not static forms of distribution, they are "matrices of transformations". (Foucault, 1976, p. 99)

The author Jeff Hearn (2016) discusses gender oppression and roles in society in a political view but from a masculine point of view, in his article *From Hegemonic Masculinity To The Hegemony Of Men*, where he defines hegemony as "the form and nature of domination reproduced: of whom and by whom" (Hearn, 2016, p.55). According to the author, in capitalist and patriarchal systems, power is a significant and pervasive aspect of all men's social relations, actions and experience and, as a consequence, includes taken-for-granted violations and violence of all the various kinds.

In addition to hegemony, hegemonic masculinity defines a form of masculinity that is socially expected of men that reinforces its dominance: the social importance of sport, physicality, force and power development and patterns of sexuality. Hegemony, for Connell (1998, cited in Hearn, 2016, p. 61) and Surman (1994, cited in Hearn, 2016, p. 61), occurs when people are convinced of seeing certain things as natural, which can be quite subjective considering that the social reality of men and women are evidently different.

The documentary *The Mask You Live In* (2017), directed and produced by Jennifer Newsom, explores the concept of power and expectations of masculinity from a male point of view and how there is a dominant hierarchy in social circles: the "weak bottom" is always related to the feminine, and the interviewees defines this hierarchy as being the origins of sexism and homophobia. Several boys and adults share their experience, involving bullying and pressure from their social circles and of what society thinks being a "real man" is. It follows certain masculine archetypes, for example, showing no emotions or feelings, using violence and physical strength to solve problems, being dominant and being a womanizer.

Masculinity is not organic it's reactive. It's not something that just develops, it's a rejection of everything that is feminine ( . . . ) We put them in that trajectory, through our popular culture, through our

parenting styles, through our educational styles and through assumptions about "natural manhood" and "maleness" that we pass along that are incredibly insulting and damaging. And then there's a whole social system that polices them, though this whole level of threat from other men if they're not man enough. (Dr Caroline Heldman, 2017)

The highlight of *The Mask You Live In* (2017) is when approaching the topic of porn, as it reveals that boys spend on average two hours watching porn, 21% of men consume porn on a daily basis and 18% of boys have seen rape online, thereby illustrating how aggression and rape are culturally normalized. Both Hearn and Newsom expose, in their respective works, that even though men still have undoubtedly social privileges and women are still the most affected and repressed by it, men can be directly impaired in a sexist society if a man does not fit the parameters of masculinity.

What they get when they get there is not just sex, it's like incredible levels of normalized brutality and sexism that's associated with the sexual act. ( . . . ) We have a rape culture. What that means is that individual rapists are not just crawling out of the swamp, they are being produced by our culture. (Dr Jackson Katz, 2017)

*She's Beautiful When She's Angry* by Mary Dore (2014) presents the history of women who lead the feminist movement in the 60's through videos, interviews and statements. The film brings mostly the path of the women rights' movement and a vision of the feminist movement as whole, including topics such as women's rights over their own body, sexual relations, how the criminal justice system prosecutes rape and the constant problem of victim blaming in sexual crimes. A post-modern view of women's rights is approached by the BBC documentary *Blurred Lines: The New Battle Of The Sexes* conducted by Kirsty Wark in 2014, which smartly questions with several men and women today forms of sexism and misogyny in pop culture and online, through gaming, music videos, comedy shows or magazines.

You may not be sexist at all, but if you laugh at sexist jokes either just to be sociable or what you think it is an ironic way, men and women, what are you actually doing is validating people in the room who are sexist and

misogynistic and hearing guilt of laughter simply encourages them to behave in a sexist and misogynistic way. (Kirsty Wark, 2014)

The documentary also evaluates the role that misogynistic influences have in the formation of men and women's behaviour towards sex, for example, through pornography. In a focus group conducted with a group of teenagers in a school, Wark (2014) evidenced that a girl is considered a "slut" if she talks about sex. The interviewed girls also revealed feeling pressured when it comes to sexual intercourse, as they say that boys usually follow the "porn" pattern: the male as the dominant and the centre of attention.

Jill Salloway (2016) approaches in a different way the social organization of sexes in culture, more specifically in filmmaking, where she describes the objectification of women compared to the empowerment of men in the Male Gaze, as theorised by Laura Mulvey. The Male Gaze theory, posits that women are deliberately positioned as an object of desire of heterosexual cisgender male, a role that overrides her feelings and thoughts and her own sexual desires and it would only satisfy the gaze of the male viewer. The suggested Female Gaze, however, would not be the opposite of the Male Gaze, but an empathetic style of filmmaking that appreciates or takes into account the feeling of a scene over the actions and portrays women as the subject, not the object.

The good girls get proposed to, the bad girls die, get in accidents, and get killed. The drunken ones get what's coming to them. So the Female Gaze can be a cultural critic. We can use it to call out all of those storylines on those procedurals -- that are meant to work as public service -- meant to educate us about rape but they actually are just more rape (Jill Salloway, 2016)

## 2.4 The Role of the Media

Carolyn Byerly and Karen Ross (2006) explore different aspects and angles on the way women are portrayed in the mass media, not only women's routine omission from media, but also the ways in which women are constantly stereotyped. Despite advances in the feminist movement, women in the news still face worrying trends, such as, the commodification of women's bodies, where women are reduced

to their body parts and preserve the male-ordered culture and reinforcing gendered norms.

The authors argue that the media normally limits women's as being victims but fails to report them in significant positions (as, for example, judges, parliamentarians, entrepreneurs and business leaders) or even as a spokesperson. The media performs a crucial role of defining news agenda and public opinion, thus, promoting gender roles in public issues only makes even more difficult for the public to see that women equally as men occupy significant roles in society (Byerly and Ross, 2006, p. 40). According to a gender analysis by European Commission (1999), women are overrepresented as victims, usually of sexual nature violence as the media has a fascination on portraying the fragile and vulnerable female, since "it says something very powerful about women's agency and women's role in society" (Byerly and Ross, 2006, p. 42). Based on several studies, Byerly and Ross list prevailing women stereotypes on the news: women who suffered male sexual violence are described as victims, placing them as passive and dependent, and often blamed by their behaviour. The perpetrators are captioned with sensationalist adjectives as "monsters" or "beasts". These labels create a distance between the "monsters" and ordinary men, implying that these crimes are rare and that normal men are not capable of committing sexual crimes, only "unnatural men".

The framing of sexual assaults ( . . . ) encourages the view that such crimes are both rare and the result of individual pathology that requires a law-and-order response rather than constituting a serious social problem that requires a social reform solution. (Byerly and Ross, 2006, p. 43)

The media message excuses men for their helpless biological urges and blames women for provoking them. This contradictory approach by journalists not only fails their main task that is to inform, but reinforce gender role, sexual oppression, trivialize sexual violence against women and rape culture, discredit women's voices and discourage women to report.

The way in which the media continue to contribute to this circulation of passive and victimized femininity is through the repetitive framing of

woman as a victim, woman as an object, woman as a body. This particular frame is routinized and normalized, endlessly recycled to protect the status quo - men on top, again, and women underneath, in every sense. Women remain always less than the sum of their body parts. (Byerly and Ross, 2006, p. 54)

Rosalinda Gill (2007), similarly, criticized in her book *Gender And The Media* all aspects of gender representation in the media and its relation to news values, but most importantly, the author highlights the distorted news reporting of sexual violence by mass media organizations and lists the rape myths and stereotypes in news reporting that are completely contradictory with reality:

1. Discrediting the witness victim/ women's reputation: The belief that victims in some way provoke the crime, by their dress or behaviour and, for this reason "they deserved it" as they did not protect themselves properly against "uncontrollable" male sexual desire. In press reporting, the female victim tends to be exposed and described in sexualized language. (Gill, 2007)

Men are never described as hysterical, bubbly, pretty, pert, prudish, vivacious, or flirtatious, yet these are all words used to describe the female victims (...) Male crime victims are rarely described in terms of their sexual attractiveness, while female crime victims almost always are. (Benedict, 1992, pp. 20-21, cited in Gill, 2007, p. 139)

2. Rape is sex - the triviality of unwanted sex: The idea that rape is "only" sex and not an extremely invasive physical attack, which encourages the belief that rape is not a serious sexual crime. (Gill, 2007, p. 140)

3. Rapists are usually black and/or lower class: Racist myth about black men sexuality and their "lack of self-control" and their desire to punish white men by raping "their" white women; which completely ignores the facts that most rapes occur between the same ethnic group and that black women have been raped disproportionately by white men throughout history. (Gill, 2007, pp. 140-141)

4. The attacker is motivated by lust: The myth that rapes are perpetrated by men who have an uncontrollable sexual desire because of a particular woman, that consequently becomes the one who provoked it. Rapists are not motivated by sexual

gratification, but by anger, power and necessity to humiliate and dominate a woman. (Gill, 2007, p. 141)

5. Women cry rape for revenge: The idea that women come up with false accusations of rape in order to get her revenge, or to get attention or even to disavow a sexual encounter that she later regrets. In fact, rape has one of the highest standards of evidence than any crime, but still judges often do not believe in the victim. Thus, the women "provoked" the rape or she is "crazy" and has "made up" a fake accusation for personal reasons. (Gill, 2007, p.142)

6. Rapists are deranged strangers: The idea that "real rape" would only be one committed by a stranger, which ignores the fact that the victims, most of the time, know the perpetrator. Yet, news media persists in reporting a small minority of crimes that "fit" in what is considered "real rape", probably as it carries tragedy and violence, both adjectives considered important in terms of "news values". (Gill, 2007, p. 143)

The available evidence shows that most rapes are not reported as news at all; only the most atypical cases, often with bizarre or horrific violence, received prominent coverage and gruesome sexual murders are disproportionately over-reported compared with their actual incident. Ordinary rapes, it seems, are simply not deemed newsworthy (Gill, 2007, p.144)

The reporting of sexual attacks, as mentioned by Byerly and Ross (2006), constructs the image of a "sexual beast": sometimes the man is named after a feature of the crime (e.g.: The rapist of Camdem Street) or will even be linked to fictional characters, for example, Hannibal Lecter.

The media role in discrediting and exposing the victim and sensationalizing the rapists produce a distorted view of reality, trivialize the seriousness of what a rape is and even contributes to the rapist getting away with their crime. Evidently, myths will not appear in every report and it depends on the style of the newspapers, however, the ideas continue to be propagated in news reporting of sexual violence against women.

BBC's 2015 documentary *India's Daughter* presents the case of a 23-year-old girl who was gang raped and murdered. The repercussions of the case divided the



country into the ones who were outraged by the case and the ones who blamed the victim by the circumstances, including one of the convicted perpetrators and his defence lawyer who were interviewed in the documentary. One of the rapists Mukesh Singh declared in the interview: "When being raped, she shouldn't fight back. She should just be silent and allow the rape (...)" and that "A girl is far more responsible for rape than a boy. A decent girl won't roam around at nine o'clock at night. Housework and housekeeping is for girls, not roaming in discos and bars at night doing indecent things, wearing indecent clothes". A.P. Singh, the lawyer, was shown saying "If my daughter or sister engaged in pre-marital activities and disgraced herself and allowed herself to lose face and character by doing such things, I would most certainly take this sort of sister or daughter to my farmhouse, and in front of my entire family, I would put petrol on her and set her alight." The documentary was banned in India.

## 2.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this review was to view key studies, theories, researches and documentaries to provide a theoretical and informative basis when analysing the case studies in the Methodology chapter. It is clear from the literature review how our culture was structured and still is immersed in a sexist, heterosexual and binary system. Along with this, it is also clear that this system that privileges a heterosexual male gender, resulting in a society that bounds people within a given gender role. This field of study is a concern with ending gender roles and gender oppression, a social arrangement, which I believe has generated a series of social problems.

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Overview

The role of news coverage performed by the media carries a significant weight of being the definers of news agenda (Byerly and Ross, 2006) and influencing public opinion. This function is accompanied by a set of values that has the objective to gain more visibility (Noelle-Neumann, 1987) and increase its importance within its audience.

The coverage of sexual violence against women does not follow a different path, regardless of its horrendous, oppressive and sexist nature. The reason is that negativity, tragedy and violence, nouns that characterize a rape, are the same nouns that entice readers when reading a newspaper. Therefore, such terms become also enticing to journalists, who tend to give importance to these stories prioritizing its readers' attention and curiosity (Johnson-Cartee, 2004) instead of the sexist nature of the crime.

Furthermore, the unbiased and neutral style of informing, alleged by most of the newspapers, was investigated. The informative content involving rape has the possibility of reproducing a culture of gender oppression (explored in the literature review); this is carried out by overexposing the victim, practicing victim blaming and reproducing certain stereotypes referred in section 2.4 of the Literature Review.

The two rape cases in Ireland and in Brazil are adequate examples of how the media system chooses to cover a sexually violent crime, as the perpetrator are men and the victims are women. In Brazil, especially, the case under discussion devolves into a case of national commotion.

In order to examine the cases in detail and the newspapers about said coverage, several articles from Brazilian and Irish media written about said cases were analysed. Due to the large amount of available content on the cases and the influence of newsrooms, the research focuses on newspapers as source.

The method used for this case study was quantitative and qualitative content analyses of articles that were published by Brazilian, Irish and British newspapers.

The duration for the analysis was confined to a seven-month period, starting respectively from the first day of the month that the crime occurred.

In 2016, two rape crimes occurred in Brazil and in Ireland. In May, a 16-old-girl was gang-raped in Rio de Janeiro and the crime was recorded and shared by the perpetrators in social media; in November, a rickshaw driver raped a girl in Dublin after a nightclub, claiming he was her friend. Despite the horrendous nature of both crimes, the victims had their personal lives exposed and a number of the articles carried a sensationalist tone, which concedes a proper analysis of the newspaper articles.

### 3.2 Quantitative-Qualitative Content Analysis

In the direction of exploring the existing relations between journalism, gender oppression and the reporting of rape crimes, content analyses of the news coverage of the two cases were conducted.

Content analyses are useful as it allows the researcher to deal with current and/or historical subjects, with long or shorts periods of time resulting in straightforward findings and relevant indicators. Moreover, it is a useful method when studying and analysing media organizations and news content as media content analysis is actually considered a specific systematic method for the studies of mass media. (MacNamara, 2005)

Content analysis operates on the view that verbal behaviour is a form of human behaviour ( . . . ) that the communication process is an aspect of the historical process ( . . . ) content analysis is a technique which aims at describing, with optimum objectivity, precision, and generality, what is said on a given subject in a given place at a given time. (Lasswell, Lerner and Pool, 1952, p. 34, cited in MacNamara, 2005, p. 2)

The content analysis method has been used since the 18th century and it was first used in United States as an analytical technique in the 20th century. (Barcus, 1959 and Rosengren, 1981, cited in Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1278) Early researchers such as Bernard Berelson (1952) defined the method as a “research technique for the objective systematic and quantitative description of the manifest

content of communication" (p.18), primarily defining content analysis as a quantitative research method that uses statistics and coding data.

Specifically, the author defends the quantitative content analysis technique as one that produces objective, measurable and verifiable findings from the content under analysis (Berelson, 1952). Similarly, Anders Hansen (1998) describes the method for "the systematic analysis of communication content" (Hansen, 1998, p. 90).

However, this limited quantitative angle has been criticised by other authors for its systematic, quantitative bias and for its difficulty to reliably interpret and decode meanings on the content produced (Hansen, 1998).

Although these criticisms are indeed relevant, one of the characteristics and advantages of quantitative content analysis is that it allows the combination with other research methodologies to improve and investigate deeper findings, depending on the research objective.

The concept of Berelson (1952) was later reviewed by Morgan (1993, cited in Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1278) as a "quantitative analysis of qualitative data", which allowed a new qualitative angle of the original concept of content analysis. More recently, the potential of content analysis as a qualitative analysis method was recognized and discussed by other researchers, leading an increased application and popularity (Nandy & Sarvela, 1997, cited in Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1278).

Content analysis is and should be enriched by the theoretical framework offered by other more qualitative approaches, while bringing to these a methodological rigour, prescriptions for use, and systematically rarely found in many of the more qualitative approaches (Hansen, 1998, p. 90)

The method of qualitative content analysis is used to analyse text data beyond counting and classifying words. It intensely studies the language and communication text data to find relevant, similar and even subjective meanings and interpretations through the process of classifying coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The goal of content analysis is "to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study" (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 314).

As the cases and the subject in study undeniably carry complexity and cultural weight, I opted for a content analysis that blended both quantitative and qualitative techniques, as they complemented each other and provided a combination I believe answered my research questions and fulfilled the objective of this thesis, which was to examine content messages produced by news media.

The quantitative and qualitative analyses provided an interpretation of the articles and identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings but the quantitative provided the analysis in numbers and in a systematic view, while the qualitative surveyed at how themes, biases and meanings are generated (Smyth, 2016).

### 3.3 Gender as a Category of Analysis

Until the 80s the conception of the binary division of sex and gender was a well-defended theory. A few years later, the feminist author Joan Scott (1995) brought new perspectives for gender studies in her article *Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis*, originally published in 1986, where she approaches the descriptive and traditional uses of the concept of gender.

The author deconstructs the traditional and conservative definitions, as the universal and binary opposition between men and women, seeking a new perspective on symbols and language towards gender. Scott (1995) considers that the gender concept is deep rooted in relations of power.

Scott (1995) also discusses how gender is usually used in academic works, emphasising that this concept should be used as an analytical category. However, this scenario would only work with new theoretical paradigms.

Accordingly, she criticizes the manner in which research on social relations are usually conducted; although they do, in fact, analyse social relations between men and women, they are usually limited to certain sectors of social structure, for example, family, reproduction and gender ideologies. This research enhances the traditional, according to Scott (1995) use of gender without considering new insights and social transformations and, moreover, without questioning paradigms and the structure of relations between men and women.

Instead, gender becomes a way of denoting 'cultural constructions' - the entirely social creation of ideas about appropriate roles for women and men. It is a way of referring to the exclusively social origins of the subjective identities of men and women. Gender is, in this definition, a social category imposed on a sexed body. (Scott, 1995, p. 156)

As this thesis is structured with themes surrounding sexism and gender oppression, it is relevant to consider Joan Scott's approach to gender as a category of analysis, considering new theories and perspectives of gender.

### 3.4 Data Collection

For the data collection, several articles of the Irish, British and Brazilians on the two rape cases crimes previously mentioned were studied using a qualitative and a quantitative content analysis technique. British and Irish media for the case occurred in Dublin and Brazilian media for the case occurred in Rio de Janeiro.

The reason for only selecting newspaper source articles goes beyond the reliability of newspapers as information source; the exclusivity of newspapers turned out to be necessary due to the cases' large coverage on several websites. An analysis of all coverage would not have been possible giving the execution schedule of this thesis.

The newspapers featured in the content analysis are both from broadsheet and tabloid quality and considered as prestigious news sources in both countries. The chosen newspapers from each country include: *O Estado de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* for Brazilian Media; *Irish Independent*, *The Herald*, *Irish Times*, *Irish Daily Mail*, *Irish Examiner* for Irish Media; *The Sun* and *The Mirror* for British Media.

The data set for this study consisted of 73 articles in total, 23 articles for Dublin case and 50 articles for the Brazilian case. All the articles were retrieved via the LexisNexis online and the Irish Newspaper Archive databases, available on Griffith College Dublin's Library website, and newspapers online search engine.

#### 3.4.1 Dublin Case

Initially, for the Dublin case, British media was not considered as a source, as the ideal scenario would be working with Irish media coverage only. However, the newspapers listed on LexisNexis in the source category Irish Publications did not

include tabloids newspapers. The database does not correctly differentiate Irish and British newspapers, even though they have different content in their respective editions. Another unpleasant aspect was that LexisNexis did not generate a considerable volume of articles, even when I increased the range of Irish newspapers. Therefore, I opted to include British media sources, thus, I ended up including the tabloids *The Sun* and *The Mirror*. The inclusion of tabloids was necessary to maintain a source balance between tabloids and broadsheet, considering they have different coverage styles.

According to Hansen (1998), the choice of media sources involves several considerations, including format and content characteristics of the media, which are closely related to the types of audience and how these audiences are impacted. Hansen (1998) relays that the audience demographic type considered important aspects such as age, social class, race and gender.

With regards to the Dublin case, the terms “rape” and “rickshaw” were entered into the LexisNexis and the Irish Newspaper Archives search engines, and were confined to a seven-month period from the month the crime occurred, between November 2016 and June 2017. As previously mentioned, the source categories used in LexisNexis were UK National Newspapers and Irish Publications. With LexisNexis, the articles that were not from the selected news sources and replicated articles from the same newspaper were excluded, with an exception if replicated in the newspaper's online version. As I wanted to ensure complete coverage of the case, I entered all Irish newspapers search engines individually and the newspapers that generated news articles were *Irish Independent*, with 4 more articles; *The Herald*, with 3 articles; *The Sun*, with 2 articles and *The Mirror*, with 1 new article. All the research generated a final number of 23 articles.

### **3.4.2 Brazil Case**

Researching the Brazilian case, I opted to use Portuguese the language to research the terms, as I believe the English translation provided by LexisNexis could modify the meaning of the words and context. The terms “estupro” (rape) and “Rio de Janeiro” were entered in LexisNexis search engine and were confined to a seven-

month period from May 2016, when the crime occurred, to January 2017. Similar to the Dublin Case, the search produced 99 articles at first; articles that were not from the selected news sources and replicated articles were excluded, resulting a final number of 50 articles.

At first, the search in the Brazilian media was an obstacle, as I expected to approach different newspapers as *Folha de S. Paulo*, one of the most important newspapers in Brazil. LexisNexis database on Brazilian publications was very limited and the vast majority of articles from *Folha de S. Paulo's* digital website are exclusively accessible to subscribers, limiting the visualization of the articles. The same time frame and search terms were entered into the search engine, but the viewing options from all the news sources were not as flexible and convenient as in the LexisNexis database. Thus, I selected the newspapers available in the LexisNexis system with greater impact nationally in Brazil, in terms of circulation.

However, after the download from LexisNexis, the final volume of articles was not a problem, as *O Estado de S. Paulo* reported basically every process of the crime. It generated a large amount of articles that were replicated in a several different Brazilian online websites and the number was sufficient to provide an adequate analysis of the case.

Additionally, the Brazil case was a case of national commotion, impacting governmental discussions and involving important political figures in Brazil. For this reason, the number of articles was greater than the Dublin case, even through a smaller amount of news sources.

The connotation of national commotion of the Brazilian case is related to the conception of moral panic explored by Gayle Rubin (2001):

Moral panics are the “political moment” of sex, in which diffuse attitudes are channelled into political action and from there into social change (...) During a moral panic, such fears attach to some unfortunate sexual activity or population. The media become ablaze with indignation, the public behaves like a rabid mob, the police are activated, and the state enacts new laws and regulations. (Rubin, 2001, p. 164)

This resemblance occurs as the Brazilian case has practically the same characteristics as the moral panic proposed by Rubin (2001). The violent sexual



crime provoked such immediate fear in the Brazilian population, especially women, that politicians supported and promoted Feminist campaigns and even discussed rape laws changes especially for the case's judgment.

Rubin notes that the moral panic is usually followed by consequences that affect everyone, legally and socially. However, these consequences hardly will concretize to a real progress as they "draw on the pre-existing discursive structure which invents victims in order to justify treating 'vices' as crimes" (Rubin, 2001, p. 163). Today, the crime that once caused panic, is no longer discussed or considered newsworthy for the media. Rape and gang rapes, on the other hand, is still a reality.

*O Globo* and *O Estado de S. Paulo* are among the newspapers with the largest circulations in the country. *O Estado de S. Paulo*, owned by *Grupo Estado*, is published in the metropolitan region of São Paulo, the biggest in the country, and distributed nationally. Its circulation reaches over 250 thousand copies daily and its audience is composed mainly of men, middle class and between 25 to 54 years old. The newspaper's online version *Estadão.com* has 8,7 million page views daily. *O Globo* newspaper is based in Rio de Janeiro and it is considered the most relevant print publication in the *Grupo Globo* media conglomerate, the largest media group in Brazil. It counts with a daily circulation of 320 thousand copies. Its audience is almost equally comprised of by men (52%) and women (48%), middle class and mostly between 18 and 50 years old.

### 3.5 Quantitative Data Analysis and Coding

The process of constructing an adequate coding schedule is an important and demanding process of quantitative content analysis. The main objective at this stage is to analyse the newspaper articles in order to provide clear findings of what is being counted.

The categories selected for the coding schedule are synchronised, partly, with the research questions, as qualitative research will be conducted also. Thus, the categories will be related to what can be counted in order to address the research questions.

The main source used to generate the articles was LexisNexis. Nevertheless, as LexisNexis solely did not provide enough content, other sources were exploited: The Irish Newspaper Archives and *Irish Independent*, *Irish Examiner*, *The Mirror*, *The Sun* and *The Herald* newspapers online search engines.

This content analysis combines both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in nature and the focus is to analyse the meaning of textual content of the articles. This procedure is propitious given the focus of this research, which is analysing a culture of sexism and gender oppression based on two cases of sexual violence towards women and its relation with the media.

The categories of the coding schedule were inspired by a content analysis exemplified by Anders Hansen (1998) in his *Content Analysis* reading. The categories selected for the study of the cases include general information about the publication and the articles: name of the newspaper, date and year of the article, title of the article, word count and name of the journalist.

Additionally, in order to obtain an in-depth analysis on the articles' content, a list of keywords describing and related to both the victim and the perpetrator were chosen to be counted, and also examined, individually based on their context. The articles were classified by its focus on the perpetrator, the victim, the crime or other focus (e.g.: protests, campaign).

Initially, I planned to interpret the tone used by the newspaper when mentioning the victim in articles and coded it in positive, negative or neutral. However, as I was analysing the first articles, defining the tone was quite subjective, complex and biased, especially considering I had to count it. Thus, I preferred to exclude the tone category from both the coding schedule and research questions.

In fact, the combination of the article and headline keywords was able to provide an overall the tone of the article for both victim and perpetrator. I believe the articles provided enough content to compare with the rape coverage stereotypes referenced in the Literature Review.

### 3.5.1 Construction of a coding schedule

The definition of analytical categories and, subsequently, the construction of a coding schedule is an important part of the process of a quantitative content analysis. After the analytical categories are defined, they need to be organized in a codable form in order to obtain the research results. (Hansen, 1998)

Once the coding schedule is constructed, the articles can be individually analysed and completed. The process of piloting a coding schedule is simply reading every article and filling in the coding schedule, based on the content of the article.

#### Content Analysis coding schedule Press Coverage

##### NEWSPAPER

☐

- |                          |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1- The Irish Times       | 5- Irish Daily Mail     |
| 2- The Irish Independent | 6- The Herald           |
| 3- The Irish Examiner    | 7- O Estado de S. Paulo |
| 4- The Sun               | 8- O Globo              |

##### DATE-MONTH-YEAR

--	--	--	--	--	--

##### NEWSPAPER HEADLINE

---

##### REPORTER/AUTHOR

---

##### ARTICLE LENGHT (Number of words)

---

##### ARTICLE FOCUS

☐

- |                    |               |
|--------------------|---------------|
| 1- The crime       | 2- The victim |
| 3- The perpetrator | 4- Other      |

##### KEY WORDS - PERPETRATOR

##### KEY WORDS - VICTIM

**Table 1 - Coding Schedule**

### 3.6 Qualitative Data Analysis

In order to explore the relationship between gender oppression, sexism and newspapers' media coverage, a qualitative content analysis was carried out of news coverage of two cases of sexual violence, which occurred in 2016 in two separate news sources based in two different countries. The two countries were Brazil and Ireland.

According to MacNamara (2005), the purpose of qualitative research is to investigate certain issues in detail. In this case, this qualitative research investigated gender oppression and rape culture reporting in news media. I opted to conduct the qualitative research based on Miles and Huberman (1994) sampling approach, which allows the exploration of the theme.

As the nationality of the perpetrator in the Dublin case is Brazilian, it may be argued that the Irish media might cover him differently if his nationality was Irish. However, my point in this thesis is not to differentiate coverage based on nationality, but coverage based on how the news media under analysis opts to portray the elements of a rape case.

As stated, the articles from the selected Irish, British and Brazilian news sources were retrieved using three different search engines: LexisNexis, The Irish Newspaper Archive and newspapers' online search engines. The articles were firstly submitted to a quantitative content analysis using a coding schedule. Subsequently, qualitative content analysis was then applied to both countries' sets of articles. The articles were downloaded from their respective search engines and pasted together in two files separating Irish and British news media and Brazilian news media.

MacNamara (2005), referencing Miles and Huberman (1994), argue that sampling strategies in qualitative content analysis should be based on a conceptual question, and three techniques are suggested to be used in order to conduct the research:

1. Selecting apparently typical/representative examples;
2. Selecting negative/disconfirming examples; and
3. Selecting exceptional or discrepant examples

By choosing a combination of typical, disconfirming and exceptional examples for study, qualitative analysis can explore the boundaries of the data field and identify the range of views including discordant ones and extremes in various directions, as well as the typical (MacNamara, 2005, p. 18)

### 3.7 Data Preparation and Analysis

All the data provided by the selected newspapers was examined and individually and manually categorised, using a Word document files (.docx) to store the articles and to apply the coding schedule.

The data was analysed based on the research questions and objective. For the quantitative, as previously discussed, the coding schedule was utilised for the analysis. For the qualitative approach, "external" information on the articles was studied and considered, as for example, the format of newspapers (tabloid vs. broadsheet) and the format of the article (opinion piece vs. news article).

### 3.8 Ethics and Potential Challenges

As the research method conducted in this thesis is a content analysis and does not involve "human participation", ethical dilemmas and principles are not applied in this study.

However, this research presented a series of unexpected challenges resulting from conducting content analyses research. The idea was to utilise only LexisNexis as a content provider, only Irish media, not British, for the Dublin case and also to have more diversified newspaper sources for Brazilian media. The accessibility of both situations was not as easy as expected and, consequently, I had to expand my sources in the Irish media and to limit my sources in the Brazilian media, as the search engines for Brazilian newspaper proved to be inaccessible.

The research itself on the articles was also time consuming, as each of the 73 articles had to be analysed separately. Finally, as discussed, the analysis of the data in a content analysis depends on the researcher's interpretation. Therefore, the results and findings cannot be considered totally representative as it varies according to who is interpreting it.

## 4 Findings and Results

### 4.1 Introduction

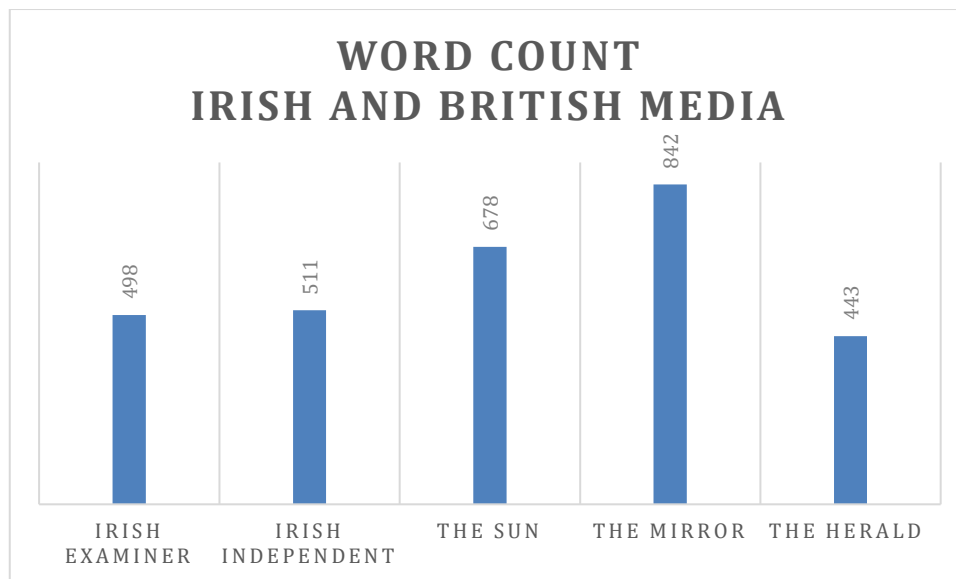
This chapter presents the results generated from the aforementioned quantitative and qualitative content analysis research. The chapter's structure presents the findings mixing qualitative and quantitative, focusing more on the qualitative, as the research questions do not focus on counting, but analysis. As it was previously explained, the objective is to use both methods to complement each other in order to answer the research questions in a clear and straightforward manner.

### 4.2 Analysis of articles

The total sample of 73 articles relating to my search criteria was taken from different British, Brazilian and Irish news media sources using the databases LexisNexis and The Irish Newspaper Archive, focused on two cases of sexual violence, which occurred in Brazil and Ireland. The sample includes both newspaper and online articles. In addition, Irish news media's online search engines were utilised as a complement to generate a larger number of articles.

#### 4.2.1 Word count

The articles under analysis did not consider a minimum word count and included short articles. Chart 1 illustrates the average word count of all the articles categorized by Irish and British publications. The newspaper *The Irish Times* and *The Daily Mail* just generated one article each, thus, they were not included on the article's average of word count.



**Chart 2 - Word Count Irish and British Publications - Dublin Case**

The total calculated average approaching all the newspapers and all the articles was 580 words. It can be observed that *The Mirror*, *The Sun* and the *Irish Independent* articles (two tabloids and one broadsheet) had the highest average word count; with the highest word count was of 1023 from the tabloid publication *The Sun*. On the other hand, *The Herald* and the *Irish Examiner* had the lowest average word count, with *The Herald* reaching an average of 443 words. *The Irish Times* and *The Daily Mail* generated one article each containing 861 and 231 words respectively. Although it had one of the highest word counts, *The Irish Times* article did not present much content on the Dublin crime, victim or perpetrator. It was an article on sexism that briefly mentioned that the crime occurred in Dublin. It is worth mentioning that longer articles, mostly tabloids, provided more details on the case and even on the life of the perpetrator and victim, while the shorter articles focused more on a straightforward reporting of the facts and decisions made in court.

As the Brazilian media did not present much variety in its news sources, all the articles from *O Estado de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* (both broadsheet style newspapers) had a calculated word count average of 383.48. This number, considerably lower when compared to Irish and British media, reveals a general coverage of the Brazilian case. In fact, only a few articles conveyed background

information on the case. In general the coverage focused on updating the news among other consequences that the case provoked. These consequences will be discussed and detailed afterwards.

#### **4.2.2 Article focus**

In order to categorize the articles in terms of topics discussed and headlines, I separated four different categories of “focus”:

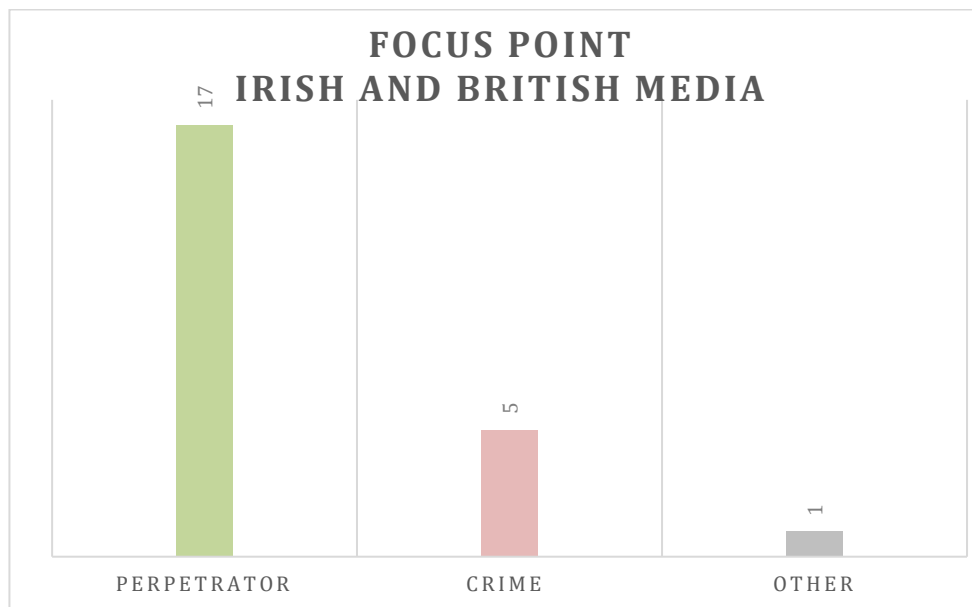
1. Perpetrator - Article focused on detailing the perpetrator’s life, action or sentence
2. Crime - Article discussed the crime in general, the investigation and its updates
3. Victim - Article details focus on aspects of the victim’s life and/or the crime from the victim’s point of view
4. Other – Miscellaneous consequences of the case, for example, protests, and repercussion among the politics

Evidently, most of the articles mentioned more than one of the listed factors in their content. However, I categorized the data considering the headline of the article and what topic was being discussed in a more detailed way.

The overall analysis when approaching Irish and British media was that none of the articles presented a focus on the victim’s point of view; most of the articles, in fact, opted for a detailed coverage of the perpetrator, emphasizing the perpetrator in the article’s headline, or the impacts of the crime. The only article I categorized as "Other" was an opinion article that discussed sexism and mentioned the case as an example. The articles from the two tabloids *The Mirror* and *The Sun* exclusively focused on the perpetrator and opted to mention him in the headline. The newspapers *Irish Examiner*, *Daily Mail* were more neutral when covering the case; their articles were classified having a focus point on the crime itself along with a few articles from *The Herald* and *The Irish Independent*. Most of the articles with a focus on the perpetrator were quite dramatic and sensationalist, especially in their usage



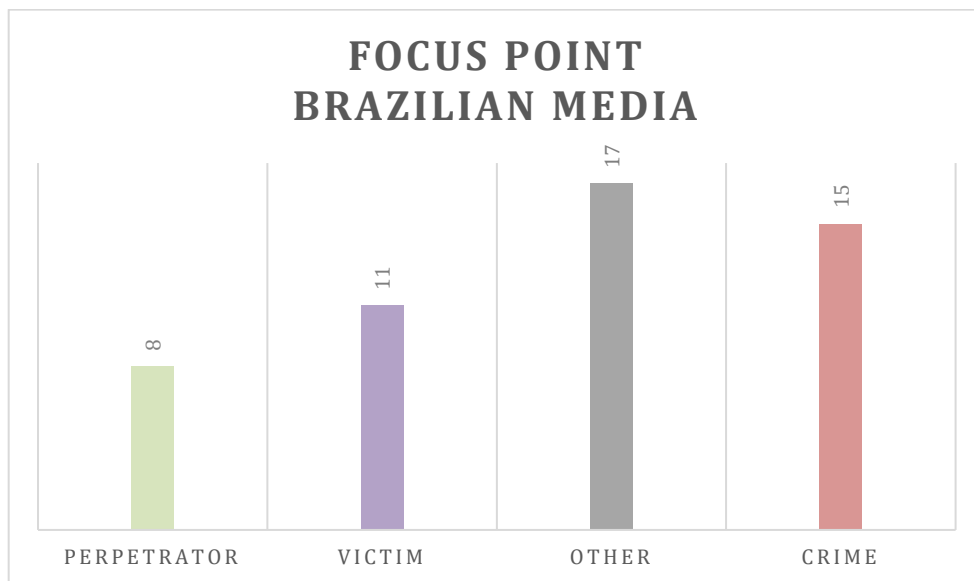
of adjectives. Indeed, the articles were quite graphic when describing the victim, emphasizing, for example, blood, the legs spread, the hair, clothing soaking wet and also the consequences she would face in the future.



**Chart 3 - Focus Point Irish and British Publications - Dublin Case**

On the other hand, Brazilian media had a considerable amount of articles focusing on the victim and other topics. The large amount of articles classified as "Other" is due to the fact that the case caused a moral panic, discussed on the Methodology chapter. Thus, there was several articles that approached political spokespeople commenting on the case and rape culture, national protests against rape culture and sexism, the influence of the case in Brazilian law, politics and other social topics, for example, abortion.

The articles' focus on the victim were mostly characterized by describing details of what occurred or even details of what happened to the victim during the investigation, mostly negative in tone. For example, an interview conducted with the investigation's police chief that alleges that the victim might have distorted the occurred in her testimony; other articles focus on her connection with the drug traffic and on her departure from Rio de Janeiro that apparently was complicating the investigation; and another exemplification is an article that focus on a music, composed by Brazilian funk MC's, which lyrics teases the victim and the rape.



**Chart 4 - Focus Point Brazilian Media - Brazil case**

In contrast, when focusing on the perpetrator, the articles tend to be neutral or even positive, to a certain extent. Most of the articles updated information relating to the investigation in terms of the accused and other possible suspects in a neutral manner. There were some articles, which stated that the suspects claimed there was no rape and even protests by the accused's family asserting that the victim was lying and the rape was actually an "orgy".

#### **4.2.3 Key words and word cloud**

During the analysis, key words that surrounded the discussion of the perpetrator and the victim were classified following the coding schedule. In order to present and study the words in a visual manner, the key words were organized in four different word clouds: victim word cloud for Irish and British media regarding the Dublin case, victim word cloud for Brazilian media about the Brazilian case, perpetrator word cloud for Irish and British media as regards to the Dublin case and perpetrator word cloud for Brazilian media regarding the Brazilian case. The key words were listed, counted using an Excel file and generated in a word cloud using the online word cloud generator WordClouds.com.

As previously stated, an analysis by European Commission in 1999









On the other hand, the tabloid *The Mirror* did not make the use of sensationalist adjectives when describing the perpetrator himself. It described the act as "brutal" and "violent" but it did not create an exaggerated tone similar to *The Sun*.

Nevertheless, both newspapers humanize the perpetrator. *The Sun* and *The Mirror* articles mentioned the perpetrators past, including his ex-girlfriend, his studies, college, postgraduate courses, former job in a bank, his remorse towards the crime and his alleged anxiety treatment with medicine. Furthermore, there was mention of the fact that the perpetrator was not used to drinking alcohol and that he had eaten very little that day justifying his "out of character" behaviour. Most of the articles also claim the fact that the perpetrator alleged having consensual sex with the victim.

These dramatic overstatements and the humanization are not exclusive to tabloids, as they are clearly present in broadsheets articles.

The *Irish Independent* is the only broadsheet that carries a tone of drama, with one article describing the perpetrator as "horror rapist". Yet, the other three articles by the *Irish Independent* and those provided by *The Herald*, however, state that the perpetrator had no previous convictions and articles by *The Herald* brings information as *The Mirror* on the alleged perpetrator's past.

Most of the newspapers describes the perpetrator approximating him to the stereotype that rapists are not normal or human, but psychopathic monsters. Nevertheless, this description does not reconcile with the empathy and humanization created towards him. It is valid to question if it is a matter of presenting the perpetrator's defence, however, it is still difficult to comprehend the reason why the same article includes a psychopath description and his history as an exemplary person (no previous convictions, previous normal relationships, college, postgraduate degree and employee). At this stage, it is relevant to note again that repeated studies found rapists usually have normal psychological profiles. (Benedict, 1992)

The Brazilian media carries a different tone when describing their perpetrators in the Brazilian case. As the selected newspapers can both be considered broadsheets, the tone as a whole is neutral with no specific characteristic adjectives for the perpetrators, even when describing some of the perpetrators

occupation as drug dealers. There was no mention of the perpetrators' use of illicit substances.

My first impression when analysing *O Estado de S. Paulo* articles is that it enhances the perpetrator's voice. The articles seem to dedicate more content to the fact that the rape was consensual and that the victim was distorting the occurred. As previously stated, the newspaper reported an interview with the Head of the Police, responsible for the case's investigation, which he affirms that the victim could be inventing the crime. The Head of the Police, apart from being responsible for the case's investigation, is the lead authority of the civil police command.

Several articles reinforce this idea. One of the articles refers to the case's press conference, led by the aforementioned Head of the Police, which he described the crime an "alleged rape". Other articles covers, for example, the late clinical report that did not indicate violence, the perpetrators and their families alleging that the victim was "super conscious" and the rape was an orgy. Other examples are the articles about the victim's exit from the city and the allegations that it was complicating the investigation. This article, however, did not consider the fact that the victim was being threatened.

Another article worth mentioning is the one that covers a Brazilian funk song, created by Brazilian funk MC's, that teases the victim and the crime. The lyrics are unpublished, due to their sexual and violent content, but it lists the men that would have raped her and it referred to the Morro da Barão region, favela where the crime was committed. The translated music name is "Don't talk about (victim's nickname), (victim's nickname) reinforces". "Reinforces", in this case, is a slang verb for sex. The music's YouTube video has over 40 thousand views and it was published right after the rape's video was leaked in social media.

It is interesting to observe the coverage during the period: at first, when the crime occurred and the victim affirmed she was raped by over 30 men, there was several articles dedicated to her point of view and also in support of the victim. However, when the investigations indicated that the probability of over 30 was low, it seemed like the victim lost her credibility, even though one of the perpetrators who recorded the crime mentioned in the video that "over 30 men" had raped her. This last piece of information was only mentioned in one of 50 articles.



#### 4.2.5 Portraying the victims

When analysing the word cloud, Irish and British media opt for a dramatic coverage of the victim. The information and characteristics used for the description is graphic, dramatic and passive. The *Irish Examiner* was the most neutral in its coverage of the perpetrator.

Most of the Irish and British articles regarding the Dublin rape that contained the word “vulnerable” were quoting Ms Justice Isobel Kennedy, which defined the crime as “a violent and callous crime perpetrated on a vulnerable, inebriated young woman”. *The Sun* was the only article that characterized the victim as vulnerable, regardless of the quote.

Several articles refer to her as “intoxicated” and “incoherent” and to the fact that she had consumed illicit substances. *The Mirror* was alone in specifying that the victim took an ecstasy tablet, apart from drinking alcohol.

Other attributes on Irish and British coverage of the Dublin case include the victim’s injuries when she was found and her consequent injuries. Articles by *Irish Independent*, *The Sun*, *Daily Mail*, *The Herald* include graphic descriptions of her “hair and clothing soaking wet”, “legs spread apart” and “horrific injuries” also followed by terms as “pool of blood”, “laceration and bruising”. When discussing her future injuries due to the crime, *The Herald*, *The Sun*, *Daily Mail* included complications in her menopause, the possibility of surgery, her use of a colostomy bag and the fact that she might not be able to give birth naturally. Specifically, I considered the numerous mentions of the fact that the victim would not be able to give birth naturally extremely problematic, as this limits women's role to being a mother, insinuating there is no other role for women. Evidently, when covering the case, the news media did not question if the victim had the desire to be a mother, which is a woman's decision, and portrayed melodramatic consequences.

Moreover, the tabloid newspapers presented the Dublin case focusing on the victim and on the crime. However, the overall approach did not distinguish from the broadsheets that also describe her injuries and her condition. Another interesting finding is that the only newspaper that shared a rape crisis helpline in its headline and in its article was the tabloid *The Sun*.

Brazilian coverage on the victim of the Brazilian case had a different tone and it altered during the investigation. In contrast to Irish and British media, the broadsheets did not impose a tone of passivity and/or drama when discussing the victim's injuries. In fact, *O Estado de S. Paulo* was concise, with only a few articles briefly describing her injuries.

As was mentioned during the perpetrator analysis, the victim seemed to lose her credibility when it was announced that it was unlikely that over 30 men raped her. The last article analysed condemned only 4 men for the crime, which is a massive difference compared to over 30.

There were reports on the victim's private life: she had religious parents, used to often go to "baile funk", used to have contact with drug dealers of the favela, her boyfriend was one of the perpetrators, she is the mother of a 3-year-old child and she was a drug user (she said in court she used illicit substances but she did not use any drugs the day the crime occurred).

Apart from the accusation from the Head of the Police and the perpetrator's family that the rape did not occur, only a few articles mentioned that the victim felt extremely disrespected and uncomfortable when she reported the crime; about this last situation she added that "now she understands why a lot of women did not report".

Likewise rape victim-blaming, negative answers from authorities and disbelief in rape cases are aspects that affect the victim's decision on reporting. According to the Forum of Public Security research (2016), referred in the Literature Review, Brazil presented a significant increase of 129% of sexual violence reports. However, the research emphasizes an oncoming progress between the numbers of reports and the number of rape cases.

The research considers that this discrepancy represents a possibility of an increase number of underreporting, considering that the majority of the victims did not report a sexual crime (Forum of Public Security, 2016, p. 39). Furthermore, the Forum of Public Security refers to a study conducted by The Institute for Applied Economic Research in 2014, which estimates that only 10% of rape cases would be reported to the police (Forum of Public Security, 2016, p.39).

A study by the research institute Datafolha (2016) says that the collecting

non-consent evidences and all the legal procedures that exposes the victim's violated body are challenging and can be traumatic.

They are specific challenges related to sexual violence that need to be considered with urgency and seriousness by the police institutions and by the justice system and they influence in low rate of rape reporting to the police. (Datafolha, 2016, p. 13)

The constant reference to her involvement with drug trafficking in the favela was written in a negative tone, even though the perpetrators were actual drug dealers and, evidently, also used to frequent baile funk. "Baile funk" are a kind of party in the favelas that plays Brazilian funk, a music genre characterized with sexual and misogynistic lyrics. Baile funks are often, but now always, financed by the drug trafficking members in the favelas. Baile funk and funk music are criminalized in Brazil, but they are legal and are part of the lower classes' culture. Nevertheless, the mention still carries a negative tone, especially considering the target audience of the newspapers *O Estado de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*: mostly middle class adult males.

Articles that referenced the fact that the victim was hampering the investigations also carried a negative tone. The victim left her city as she was being overexposed by the media and, according to her, she received death threats due to the rape report. The newspapers, however, covered the situation as she was hampering the investigation instead of covering her exit as a form of self-protection. Moreover, the articles focused on a possible misunderstanding of the victim did not consider or discuss the possible mental injuries and trauma caused by rape. Instead, it only focuses on the possibility that the victim faked the rape.

This last topic is explained by Benedict (1992, p. 17) as a stereotype that women "cry rape for revenge". Women like to use accusations of rape to get attention or to get revenge. According to an article referencing one of the perpetrator's families, the victim created the rape to hide from her religious parents. The tendency of women to lie about rape is actually extremely exaggerated, at just 2% according to researchers (Benedict, 1992, p. 18).

However, the newspaper covered a lot of political impacts caused by the crime and protests supporting victim. The case got well known nationally and

internationally, thus, several people empathized with the case and it resulted even legal changes and new research into violence against women in Brazil.

### 4.3 Conclusion

The intent of these content analyses was to obtain a comparable study between Brazil and Ireland and analyse how Brazilian, British and Irish media portrays sex crimes. It is coherent to affirm, due to the cases' findings, that the media still behaves in a sexist and oppressive way towards women. Unsurprisingly, this conduct correlates to a cultural sexist system, evident since the Literature Review chapter. Along with this, it is clear that Brazilian, Irish and British media determine and reinforces different ideals, equally sexists, of gender roles for female victims and male perpetrators, even in a traumatic situation such as rape. These findings are pessimistic, as I believe that any sex crime will ever have any significant decline while the media does not present an opposite posture to sexism.

## 5 Conclusion and Recommendations

The rise and progress of the feminist movement worldwide does not seem to move in the same direction of their representation in the media. The issues and differences of how media represents females and males when covering sex crimes are, still, glaring.

The media seems to work with representations and when it comes to women, media corporations are doing a true disservice in terms of preserving women's dignity as a human being and in terms of women as people who have rights, freedom and empowerment.

Traditional news media, which still are one of the main forms of communication and public information, uses its information dissemination to link the female figure to a role model of the ideal woman: mother, domestic servant, reproducing a female stereotype directed to passivity, subjectivity, motherhood with an additional pressure of reproducing all these "ideals" with perfection.

Even when reporting a scenario when a women is completely, physically, mentally and sexually violated, the antagonistic female and male representation do not change, but adapt. In Ireland, a rickshaw driver raped a young woman. In Brazil, an underage girl was gang raped. The two case studies present media coverage of both victims and perpetrators with sweeping statements, stereotypes and sexism, yet distinct.

As a result of the stereotypical female role, both sex crime victims seemed to be portrayed as two different images: the victim in Ireland fit in the true attacked, pure and innocent victim attacked by a monster, while the victim in Brazil seems to be a impure female who provoked and invented the crime. These two stereotypes are defined by Benedict (1992, p. 18) respectively as the virgin and the vamp.

These labels are defined according to the circumstances. Although there are references about the Irish victim having used illicit substances, she fitted in the "perfect rape crime": a passive, vulnerable, pure victim who suffered a lot of tragic and bloody injuries, including complications to a potential future motherhood, by a psychopath monster. *The Sun* tabloid newspaper even created the persona "Monster Tiso", but even broadsheet newspaper incentivized dramatic coverage as "horror rapist", which does not match with their alleged professional reporting standards. Furthermore, it seems senseless for both broadsheets and tabloids to bring a positive and human perspective when describing their "psychopath", while the victim's character is only filled with tragedy and passiveness.

In Brazil's case, the victim matches all the characteristics described by Benedict (1992, p.19) as the vamp: one of the perpetrators was her boyfriend, they both belong to the same class and race and no weapon was used in the crime. Moreover, according to a description provided by the media versus women's role model in society discussed in the Literature Review, she has deviated from the traditional female sex role: the victim is a drug user, she used to frequent baile funk, she used to know people from the favela's drug trafficking and she was a mother of a 3-year-old child. Benedict (1992, p.7) argues that, "people blame (the) victim more if she was in a bar, hitchhiking, at a party, or out on her own anywhere". The crime in Brazil, if compared to Ireland, is even worse, as the perpetrators recorded the whole act and the video went viral: rape as entertainment.

The newspapers seem to give more credit to the perpetrators as a source than to the victim. It might be due to the fact that the victim ruptures the ideal women's "role model". Her perpetrators were confirmed to be drug dealers, evidently also used to go to baile funk, but it did not receive the same negativity as she did. Any past or present use of illicit substances of the perpetrators was not mentioned and their lives did not receive the same media attention.

From my point of view, it is possible that the victim could have misunderstood the number of men she saw when she woke up, as she was doped and rape causes severe mental and physical trauma. However, the victim was so severely disregarded that even the Head of the Police did not believe her. Also, they did not seem to considerate that one of the perpetrators says in the video that over 30 men raped her.

The media covered a protest alleging that the rape was an orgy and reported a full song written for the victim that teases the occurred. All these factors reveal how women and rape are completely normalized and not taken seriously in Brazilian society. Whether it is thirty men, seven or one, it is still rape.

It is important to remind that any content published or shared by media corporation is purely a reflection of a social culture that not only incentivises degrading ideas about women but reproduces an idea of masculinity attached to violence and aggressiveness.

Men seem to be destined to be in public, to the world, to work, to rationally. Women are destined to modesty, motherhood, family, passivity and beauty. Feminism does not condemn or present any objection to women who fulfil this role, provided that is a voluntary choice and not a social role that is imposed.

Sexism is, in any case, unacceptable. It gets worse when it affects the media, as the media should be the responsible for providing information that influence public opinion. However, the media do not seem to be concerned about social responsibility but it rather to keep reproducing gender stereotypes on behalf of investigating what is the real cause behind sex crimes.

Any crime of gender and/or sexual nature should be equally treated as social issues that require social responsibility. Sex and gender crimes become stronger throughout practices, silence, oppression and omission.

Every sector of our society must comply in order to extinguish any kind gender oppression - with an emphasis on the media - that still coexist and consent to a sexist criminality and a sexist society. As Ngozi Adichie (2014, p.17) says, "culture does not make people. People make culture. If it is true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, then we can and must make it our culture".

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